

# DAILY NEWS

Thursday, September 4, 1997

46

## Editorial

### Birds of a feather

After Mayor Giuliani ejected National Helicopter Corp. from the 34th St. heliport for beating the city out of \$700,000 in back rent, the Port Authority gave the chopper pirates a new launch pad at the Wall St. heliport. It figures.

The PA has stiffed the city out of millions in rent for JFK and LaGuardia airports — so its aiding and abetting another bad tenant is no surprise. Birds of a feather really do flock together.

The PA says it must let National use its heliport because federal funds were used to build the facility. So the agency's 75 lawyers aren't clever enough to stop a gang of rogue pilots?

The deal is especially galling because, the Daily News has learned, National owes the Internal Revenue Service \$3.6 million. Surely, the PA's lawyers could find a way to stop giving tax deadbeats access to federal facilities.

National even filed a bogus bankruptcy claim to stop the city from evicting it from the 34th St. site. But the city finally prevailed last month. Soon after that, the firm began a van service from midtown to the downtown heliport.

Some of National's pilots also began landing at the state's public heliport at 34th, but did so through an arrangement with the heliport's lease holder, Air Pegasus. There are no direct payments to the state. Yet a Port Authority spokesman seems downright proud when he says National Helicopter pays it "cash on the barrel." Just whose case is it?

Giuliani has promised to reduce helicopter traffic by 40% because the droning whirlybirds are intrusive to life in the Big Apple. For once, the Port Authority should help instead of playing the worm.

HWC P 330

## COLUMN A

# Evicted copter firm comes Downtown

BY ALAN WATKINS

Midtown's loss is Downtown's gain, but when the loss and gain involves helicopter flights, the gain is a headache for Downtown and Brooklyn Heights residents.

National Helicopter Corp., evicted three weeks ago with \$700,000 rent owing at the city-owned East River heliport at 34th St., has been flying sightseeing tours from the Port Authority's Downtown Heliport.

### Nearly double

The move adds an estimated 50 take-offs and landings per day and nearly doubles the five-days per week activity of the heliport at Pier Six on the East River.

"We're concerned about that many flights and the noise, with all those residents at Southbridge Towers," said Judy Duffy, assistant district manager of Community Board 2, referring to the residential complex with 1,651 apartments south of the Brooklyn Bridge.

A Brooklyn Helicopter Task Force organized by Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden and Congressman Edolphus Towns, whose district includes Brooklyn Heights just across the East River from the Downtown Heliport, has been working for six months with helicopter industry representatives to keep the choppers away from no-fly zones over Brooklyn Heights.

### Task force

A Manhattan task force out of Borough President Ruth Messinger's office is also looking for ways to muffle the roar of whirlybirds over Manhattan.

Councilmember Kathryn Freed, who lives at Independence Plaza on the Hudson River side of Lower Manhattan, has seen both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters flying at roof-top heights. Independence Plaza has 1,345 apartments and an estimated 3,000 residents.

"We expect it to become more of a problem as new residential units are built Downtown," said a Freed aide.

The city evicted National from the 34th St. heliport on Aug. 13, after a federal Bankruptcy Court dismissed a bankruptcy petition filed by National's subsidiary, Island Helicopters. The company switched its operation Downtown the following day.

National's move Downtown from 34th St. is especially galling to Joy Held, a founder of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, which is seeking

*continued on page 6*

HWC P331

## Evicted copter firm operating Downtown

Continued from page 1

to ban all chopper flights over the five boroughs except for emergencies. The coalition filed a lawsuit against the city and National to close the 34th St. Heliport. Now that National has been replaced at 34th St. by American Port Services, the suit also names that company.

The Downtown Heliport last year handled 17,588 take-offs and landings; if the increase that National has brought since Aug. 14 is consistent, the volume of traffic could increase to more than 30,000. But the Downtown annual capacity is 60,000 take-

offs and landings, and Held anticipates still more traffic, more noise, and more potential danger, like the fatal crash of a corporate helicopter in April this year in the East River near the city's 60th Street Heliport.

Nevertheless, the Port Authority had to accept National at Downtown because the heliport was built with federal funds.

"This is a public facility and we cannot deny access," said Peter Yerkes, a Port Authority spokesperson. "But we have taken every step we can to reduce the number of

flights," he said. "They wanted to open a ticket office at the heliport, and we denied that; they wanted night time and weekend flights, and we denied that. We also denied their request to keep helicopters on the pier over night."

National, reported to owe the Internal Revenue Service more than \$3 million, and untold thousands of dollars to other creditors,

**'We're concerned about that many flights and the noise, with all those residents at Southbridge Towers.'**

had to pay the Port Authority \$25,000 security for access to Downtown, and is paying cash on its monthly bill, a Port Authority spokesperson said. Fees vary according to the weight of the

aircraft, and average about \$40 for each take-off and landing.

National is selling tickets from a tour bus office at the Port Authority Bus Terminal at 42nd St. and Eighth Ave., and is also reported to be fueling at the 30th St. Heliport, a state operated facility in the Hudson River. Peter McGann, president of National, did not return repeated telephone requests for comment on the matter.

After the fatal crash in April, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani promised to close the 60th

St. Heliport, but it is still running, operated by American Port Services, formerly Johnson Control. A spokesperson for the city Economic Development Corp., said the heliport will close in three to four months.

A master plan for helicopter operations in the city is being developed by the City Planning Department and the E.D.C. A hearing on the plan is to be held at 6 p.m. Sept. 16 at 22 Reade St.

# DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, September 9, 1997

87

## VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

### Chopper whopper

Manhattan: Mayor Giuliani recently protested against the plight of Queens residents forced to endure two weeks of noisy airplanes rerouted to accommodate the U.S. Open. Meanwhile, city residents in the five boroughs endure hundreds of helicopter overflights a day, 365 days a year, with no relief in sight. The mayor's promised 30% to 40% reduction in these overflights has evaporated into thin air. Is it too much to hope that city residents will merit the consideration accorded a sporting event?

Joy A. Held

Helicopter Noise Coalition

HWC p 333

September 16, 2007

# RESIDENT

SERVING THE UPPER EAST SIDE

VISIT US ON THE WEB! <http://www.resident.com>

10

## news

### Anti-Helicopter Group May File Another Lawsuit

The EDC has scheduled a public hearing for next week, in an attempt to solicit public comment for the helicopter master plan it is formulating. The plan will set a comprehensive helicopter policy for the city.

But helicopter opponents, a perpetual thorn in the side of the city, are not all placated.

Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, says the group was not told about the meeting and continues to be excluded from other aspects of the formulation of the master plan. The group is considering filing a lawsuit.

"We think that it is outrageous [not to be properly notified of the meeting] particularly in light of the fact that we have over 15,000 members," said Held.

The group argues that because of noise and safety concerns all non-emergency helicopter flights should be banned from the city.

Bernadette O'Leary, an EDC spokeswoman, wouldn't comment on the possibility of a lawsuit. She did say, however, that community boards and elected officials had been notified of the meeting.

Held said the coalition's lawsuit to close the East 34th Street Heliport is going forward despite the eviction of National Helicop-

ter from the heliport. American Port Services is currently transferring its operation from the East 60th Street Heliport to 34th Street. Once the transition is complete, the city says it will close the East 60th Street Heliport.

The EDC hearing will be held on Sept. 16, at the Spector Hall Auditorium of the city Planning Department at 22 Reade St. It will begin at 6 p.m. Bob Miller, a helicopter noise consultant, will speak. Miller wouldn't discuss the contents of his talk, referring a call from the *Resident* to Robert Grotell, an engineer with Edwards and Kelsey, the firm completing the master plan. Grotell declined comment, referring the *Resident's* call to the EDC.

— Peter Duffy

### Eristoff: Residents' Concerns Outweigh Helicopters'

To the editor:

To clarify my position with regard to the 34th Street Heliport, I have always — and will always — put the interests of local residents under siege from helicopter noise ahead of a corporation that takes tourists on expensive sightseeing joyrides. As the council member representing the area adjacent to the heliport, I have worked tirelessly with Community Board 6, NYU Medical Center, and residents of the surrounding community to restore peace and quiet in the neighborhood. That's why I fought successfully in the council for strict restrictions on flights at the heliport and strongly support the city's eviction of the former operator.

Councilman Andrew Eristoff

HNC p334

September 10, 1997

September 10, 1997. THE VILLAGER, p. 3

# the Villager

West Village. East Village. Soho. Tribeca and Lower East Side

## Copter firm goes Downtown

National Helicopter Corp., evicted three weeks ago with \$700,000 rent owing at the city-owned East River heliport at 34th St., has been flying sightseeing tours from the Port Authority's Downtown Heliport.

The move adds an estimated 50 take-offs and landings per day and nearly doubles the five-days per week activity of the heliport at Pier Six on the East River.

"We're concerned about that many flights and the noise, with all those residents at Southbridge Towers," said Judy Duffy, assistant district manager of Community

Board 2, referring to the residential complex with 1,651 apartments south of Brooklyn Bridge.

A Brooklyn Helicopter Task Force organized by Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden and Congressmember Edolphus Towns, whose district includes Brooklyn Heights just across the East River from the Downtown Heliport, has been working for six months with helicopter industry representatives to keep the choppers away from no-fly zones over Brooklyn Heights.

BY AL AMATEAU

FINC p 335

## Letters to the Editor

### Copter noise here now!

About two months ago, I read an article in the City Section of the New York Times, about a woman who was fighting with the heliport at 34th Street, to re-route their air traffic, since it was a 24-hour disturbance.

Apparently she won her battle, since suddenly that 24-hour disturbance is our problem. I live in 615 East 14th Street, and face the FDR Drive, and up until two weeks ago, I felt as if I lived in the country, it was so quiet.

Now, all I hear is a constant whirl of helicopters. I have alerted tenant relations as to what we can do to resolve this problem, but the bigger issue is that once we get the heliport to re-route, someone else will have the problem.

Name withheld upon  
request

HNC p 336

# Activists shut out of city copter master plan

By Geoffrey W. Williams

Two months after the city began negotiating with a group of disgruntled activists irked by helicopter traffic in Manhattan — especially at the 34th Street heliport — officials have cut off the talks and announced a public meeting to discuss their

"master plan" to expand the helicopter industry in New York.

The move by the city to go ahead with its plan to open a new "mega-heliport" at Pier 76 on the West Side appears to contradict its earlier promise this year to reduce helicopter traffic by as much as 40 percent.

City officials, through legal counsel, contacted the activists on Monday, saying they were breaking off negotiations after only one meeting.

"They refused to accept our terms," said Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC), just one of several

co-plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit filed against the city in June. Others listed in the suit include Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and State Assemblymen Steve Saunders and Richard Gottfried.

The HNC and other activists had been trying to become a part of the master-plan process since April,

the current scope of work for its master plan.

Bob Müller, one of the top helicopter noise consultants in the country, will attend the meeting, say EDC officials, as will a senior EDC transportation division employee.

While the city looks forward on the issue — its master plan is due to be completed by consultants Edwards and Kelcey early next year — Held and her supporters are peeved that their suggestions have been ignored.

"This is totally unacceptable," said Held, who claims her group was intentionally kept off the master plan's technical advisory committee. "We weren't allowed to participate, when we were told we would be."

Held blamed the city for its lack of foresight on the issue, slaming them for consulting only with those in the heliport industry, who either provide or use helicopters, and not those in the community who are most affected by them.

EDC officials could not confirm who, other than keynote speaker Miller, had been invited to the meeting.

"The EDC has shown flagrant disregard for community protest," Held said, claiming Giuliani is "paying lip service to the public" and "holding the city hostage" by saying one thing and then doing another.

The public meeting, said Held, would be little more than a "whitewash of the issue, with the city running helicopters down our throats."

"How can you have a public meeting without alerting the public?" said Held, whose supporters number more than 15,000.

"The city hasn't given the public adequate knowledge about the master plan, so how can we discuss it knowledgeably?"

The master plan, which reportedly cost the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) \$361,000 and encompasses all facets of the city's long-term helicopter policy — heliport locations, operations and air traffic — will be the topic of discussion at the September 16 public meeting, slated for the Spector Hall Auditorium at the Department of City Planning (DCP).

City officials have denied that the Mayor is going back on his word, and insisted that the upcoming public meeting was just the first step in including New York residents in the formation of Giuliani's master plan.

Bernadette O'Leary, a senior spokesperson for the EDC, claimed that the city, through the meeting, is seeking "input and suggestions from the community on

Town & Village

Sept. 11, 1997

Page 10

HNC p 337





Don Hogan Charles/The New York Times

Increased traffic at the Wall Street Heliport has incensed Brooklynites.

## A Master Plan for Copters

Irwin Suskind has lived in Brooklyn Heights since the 1960's, in an apartment overlooking lower Manhattan and the harbor. But only during the last few years has he really noticed the helicopters, swooping down from the sky like deafening birds of prey.

"It's like a highway outside my window," he said, noting that television, tourist, business and courier service choppers crisscross the area. "Sometimes, there are more than 30 flying by in an hour."

The problem has worsened since last month's eviction of National Helicopter, a tour operator, from the East 34th Street heliport in Manhattan, and the relocation of many of its flights to the Wall Street Heliport. So Mr. Suskind and other members of the Brooklyn Task Force on Helicopters say they hope for big things from the city's Economic Development Corporation.

The E.D.C. will hold its first public meeting at 6 P.M. on Tuesday at the Department of City Planning, 22 Reade Street in Lower Manhattan, to discuss the Heliport and Helicopter Master Plan it recently commissioned from a private company.

"We don't want a plan that's just going to push helicopters from one part of the city to another," said Karen Johnson, the chief of staff for Representative Edolphus Towns and the head of the helicopter task force. "We want a plan that makes sense."

An E.D.C. spokeswoman, Bernadette O'Leary, said the master plan would be "the first comprehensive

study of the city's heliports as a system, and not just as individual sites." She said that the plan would provide a framework to reduce "non-essential" flights, referring to Mayor Giuliani's April pledge — unfulfilled thus far — to shut the East 60th Street heliport and cut total traffic by 30 to 40 percent.

In addition to the Wall Street, East 34th Street and 60th Street locations, there is an aging heliport at West 30th Street. Ms. O'Leary said that Pier 76, at West 35th Street, was being considered as a possible replacement site, but that it was too early to know just how many heliports would ultimately remain.

That is not good enough for some helicopter foes, like Joy Held of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, who said she was skeptical of the city's promises. Her group, which seeks an end to all helicopter flyovers, is suing the city to close the 34th Street heliport.

Ms. Held accused city officials of "shunning" group members in connection with the upcoming hearings, and said she had been told that they would not be welcome at a meeting Tuesday morning in Brooklyn led by Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson's only comment was that she thought Ms. Held's goals were unrealistic. "All helicopter flights in New York City are not going to be banned," she said. "We need to have a meaningful dialogue with the city to construct the proper master plan."

BERNARD STAMLER

HNC  
P  
338

# THE OBSERVATORY

GEORGE GURLEY

SEPTEMBER 15, 1997

PAGE 25

**MONACO ON 80TH STREET AND AMSTERDAM** Avenue is where you go when you want to drink cappuccino, check out the attractive wait staff, and listen to a lot of Sade and Annie Lennox. It's a very good place to discuss leaving New York. Eileen Baum, research editor at *Allure* magazine, walked in and ordered Campari. She has fantasized about leaving New York since 1986.

Ms. Baum grew up in Queens, attended New York University, and left for 12 years to work as a script reader in Munich and then as a Club Med hostess in places like Bulgaria and Morocco. In 1986, she felt that her brain had turned to mush, and she returned to New York.

"What always makes me want to leave is the noise," she said. Especially the helicopters. She recalled how from 7 A.M. until 11 P.M., the choppers would be flying like "giant mosquitoes" over Central Park. They were so loud she couldn't hear the radio of her fourth-floor apartment on West 95th Street, and the windows would shake.

"It was so infuriating," she said. "I thought there was no escape, nothing to do to change it. I felt completely hopeless and then had a surge of adrenaline that resulted in a feeling of hopeless rage. I have a skylight, and I used to have fantasies to get, what's it called, one of those surface-to-air missiles or one you could put on your shoulder, you know, and in the night I would—boom!—watch it explode over me. I don't know whose company it was but believe me, I would have liked to have put all the C.E.O.'s in one helicopter and get my missile and blow them to smithereens, that's what I would have loved to have done."

For years, she wrote to the Mayor's office, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration and the New York Road Runners Club, but nothing happened until activist Joy Held came along with her helicopter commission, which is now working to ban tourist flights. Now that that's improved, however, there are other problems for Ms. Baum. When she gets to 59th Street every morning to catch the B or D train, she is confronted with the drummers.

HWC p 339

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO-FLY ZONE NOW  
IN NEW YORK CITY

TO THE EDITOR:

"The Mayor Double-Faults" [Editorials, Sept. 8] overlooks another, more egregious aspect to the Mayor's stance: While the Mayor has protested the rerouting of jets for two weeks to accommodate the U.S. Open as unfair to Queens neighborhoods, he ignores the plight of city residents who endure noise and safety threats from hundreds of helicopter overflights daily, 52 weeks a year.

The Mayor's promises of a 40 percent reduction in helicopter overflights and the closure of the East 60th Street heliport remain unfulfilled. The city continues to allow the East 34th Street and East 60th Street heliports to operate without the required special permits. When will citizens receive the same quiet as the U.S. Open? When will politicians summon the political will to vanquish the helicopter menace? When will the public get the no-fly helicopter zone over New York City land and waterways we so urgently require?

JOY A. HELD  
Manhattan

HNC p340

# DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, September 16, 1997

26

## Editorial

### Clip National's rotors

National Helicopter Corp. has become a pesky fly that must be swatted out of New York's skies. The company stiffed the city out of \$700,000 in back rent at the 34th St. Heliport. It allegedly beat the Internal Revenue Service out of \$3.6 million in taxes. And now the Port Authority has booted it from the Wall St. heliport for not having proper insurance.

Worst of all, National, which also operates as Island Helicopter, has a dismal safety record. Seven of the 15 chopper crashes in New York City since 1983 have involved its craft.

The only city heliport that hasn't nixed National is at 30th St. and the Hudson. Amid the storm of complaints, it's time for the state to move in and deny the firm this pad, too.

Helicopter traffic has risen in recent years, mostly because of tourists viewing New York from the air. With groups such as the Helicopter Noise Coalition forming to protest the droning whirlybirds, Mayor Giuliani has promised to cut helicopter traffic by 40% and to develop a plan for flights over New York.

A public meeting is scheduled for 6 tonight at 1 Police Plaza to discuss the plan. Big Apple residents who've had enough and don't want to take anymore should show up in force.

HWC p 341

September 17, 1997



p. 3

## National Helicopter's Downtown flights halted

National Helicopter flights from the Downtown Heliport on the East River at Wall St. were cancelled last week by the Port Authority because of National's "insurance problems," a Port Authority spokesperson said.

The company, which was evicted from the city-owned 34th St. heliport on Aug. 13 owing more than \$700,000 in back rent, began operations downtown the following day, making about 50 take-offs and landings each weekday and nearly doubling activity of the facility.

"We became aware last week that there was a problem with their insurance and we suspended their flights as of Wednesday [Sept. 10]," said Peter Yerkes, spokesperson for the Port Authority. Yerkes declined to specify the problems, and Peter McGann, president of National, did not return phone calls for comment on the matter.

Noise from an increasing number of helicopter flights for sightseeing, corporate and traffic reporting purposes, has prompted

the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City to seek a ban on all but emergency flights over the city.

The coalition has filed a lawsuit against the city and National to close the 34th St. Heliport. Now that National has been replaced at 34th St. by American Port Services, the suit also names that company.

An effort by the city to curtail services flying from city-owned heliports was opposed by helicopter companies in a federal court lawsuit last year. A Federal judge rejected all but a few rules imposed by the city, saying the federal government has primary jurisdiction over helicopter flights. The case is under appeal.

The Giuliani Administration also agreed to close the 60th St. Heliport on the East River after a fatal crash of a corporate helicopter this spring. The heliport, however, is still operating and the city Economic Development Corp. has indicated that it would close at the end of this year.

HNC p 342

# Town & Village

VOL. 50, NO. 40

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 18, 1997

Page 1

## Copter plan did not include public input

By Geoffrey W. Williams

City officials were met with boos and jeers at a public meeting Tuesday night after confessing that they didn't seek community input on a helicopter master plan for New York.

"We have no explanation for why we didn't include the public in the master plan," said Shirley Jaffe, a senior vice president of the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC), in opening the meeting. "There will be helicopter activity in New York. The master plan is not looking to stop helicopter traffic in the city."

The master plan being conducted by consultants Edwards and Kelcey Engineers (E.K.) cost \$361,000 and encompasses all facets of the city's long-term helicopter policy, including heliport locations, operations and air traffic. The plan is funded by federal, state and city money.

After being solicited for

funds last summer, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) awarded the city \$488,000, a sum comprising 90 percent of the amount officials said they needed to finish the plan.

The money was given, officials have confirmed, with the stipulation that the city hold at least two public meetings on the issue.

Tuesday's public meeting, held in an auditorium at One Police Plaza, was one of only two scheduled to take place during the eight-month master plan process. A second meeting will be held some time in the next six months, officials said.

Community response at the public meeting this week was overwhelmingly anti-helicopter, and anti-master plan.

"The city is adamant about refusing to recognize legitimate community concerns," said Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC), one

Please turn to Page 14

Helicopter noise and risk have been a hot topic with East Side residents recently.

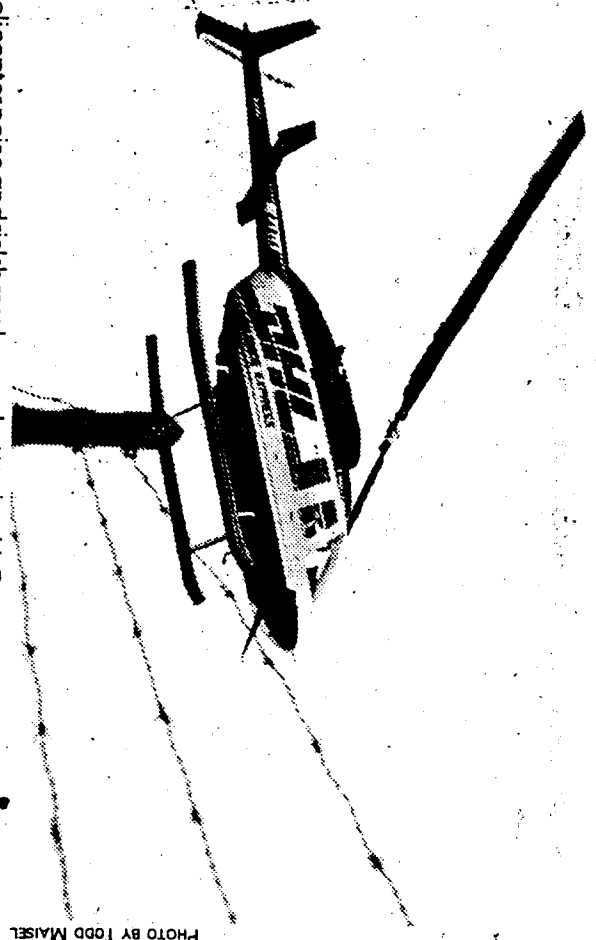


PHOTO BY TODD MAISEL

HNC p343

Cont.

# City admits public not consulted

## on copters

Cont.

Continued from Page 1

of several co-plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit filed against the city in June demanding the closure of the 34th Street heliport. (Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and Assemblyman Steve Sanders are also listed as plaintiffs.)

Held and the HNC, which claims more than 15,000 members, have been trying since April to become a part of the city's master plan team, but officials have ignored their requests.

At first, officials seemed willing to speak with the group, even though they'd sued, among others, the city, in an effort to close the 34th Street heliport. But then the city backed out of the talks.

Through legal counsel, the city contacted the activists a week ago, saying they were breaking off negotiations after only one meeting.

"They refused to accept our terms," said Held, whose group met with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's office in July and then didn't hear back until the written notice from the Mayor's lawyers arrived last week.

All they wanted, said Held, was a chance to help shape the content of the master plan. That offer never came and, with Tuesday night's meeting and one more yet to come, the city will have all the community input it needs to satisfy

federal guidelines for the money it received.

Held blames the city for its failure to respond to public sentiment, and for refusing to address community concerns, and she plans to do something about it.

"We'll take steps to [fill the gaps] in the master plan," promised Held.

"We're very seriously considering filing another lawsuit," she fumed, this one against the city for not giving the public its say in how helicopters and helipads will be controlled for the next two decades.

One woman, in response to EDC officials' admission that the public wasn't included in the master plan process, kept shouting toward the front of the auditorium, "This is a snow job."

Giuliani tentatively announced his bid for a city-wide master plan on helicopters in April, when he resolved to close the 60th Street heliport (following a fatal crash there), move its operator, Johnson Controls, to 34th Street (evicting the site's longtime operator, National Helicopter), and later open another "mega-heliport" at Pier 76 on the West Side.

Since then, National has been evicted from 34th Street, and Johnson's replaced them, but 60th Street has yet to close. Despite Giuliani's promise to cut

helicopter traffic by up to 40 percent, officials confirmed Tuesday that 60th Street will remain open at least until the end of the year.

National, which had moved to the city's downtown heliport following its eviction last month, was grounded this week by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, who runs the facility, for failure to provide evidence of insurance.

Although EDC officials on Tuesday stressed the city's move to put plans for a "mega-heliport" at Pier 76 on the back burner, they also referred to the new heliport often throughout the meeting.

According to a layout of the plan distributed at the meeting, the master plan has been divided into three phases: technical research, public participation and compilation of the report itself.

"Through the FAA's airport improvement program," said E.K. project manager Robert Grotell, referring to the program that funded most of the project, "we were able to begin the eight-month master plan in July."

Technical research, says Grotell, includes site visits to all four New York heliports, as well as the projected site for a fifth Manhattan heliport on the West Side.

HNC P344

# OUR TOWN

## HOMELESS HELICOPTERS

National Island Helicopter, evicted from the 34th Street heliport last month, has been denied landing access at a Port Authority facility on Wall Street and the East River because of insurance problems.

National Island recently moved to the Port Authority facility after being evicted from the city-owned 34th Street heliport under charges of too much noise and activity.

HWC p345



# Copter foes shut out of scope

By Richard Alllyn  
The Brooklyn Papers

A "Master Plan" to deal with the city's helicopter activity encountered a barrage of criticism from Brooklyn Heights residents and elected officials, who were denied any input in determining the scope of the long-term plan.

Joining other New Yorkers who have endured high noise levels caused by frequent low-level flights, members of the Brooklyn Helicopter Task Force spoke at a forum sponsored by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) on Tuesday evening, held at One Police Plaza in Lower Manhattan.

"There will still be helicopter activity in New York, which we will try to control or re-direct," said moderator Shirley Jaffe, senior vice-president of the EDC. "This Master Plan is not looking to stop helicopter activity in the city — we are proceeding from that point."

The parameters of the Master Plan, which include monitoring the frequency and noise levels of copters over certain areas during several weeks in late September and early October, had been established before the community was invited to participate.

"I am disappointed in the way the EDC has gone about involving the community thus far," said Ed Eillen, a Heights resident and member of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, a city-wide lobbying group. "All of this has been completed without public involvement. A cynical person would say this is nothing but a dog-and-pony show."

"For some, helicopter flights have completely disrupted daily lives," said Bay Ridge Rep. Jerrold Nadler, in a written statement. "It would have been useful and appropriate to hold a public scoping session to help craft the parameters for the Master Plan so that everyone's concerns could be addressed."

EDC officials could offer no reason for not soliciting any community input in determining the plan's scope.

"We did not include the public at-large or at-small in the preparation of the scope of work," Jaffe said. "Why weren't you included? I have no real answer for you. I have no excuse."

Aside from collecting data on current heliport and helicopter activity, the Master Plan calls for the development of a 20-year strategic plan to focus on both "operational efficiency and community compatibility."

A public participation program, including the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee, is slated to complement

the preparation of the plan. The final Master Plan study, with an estimated total cost of \$343,000, is scheduled for release on March 4.

Copter critics also blasted the plan's attempt to gather information on heliport activity and chopper noise, which will be

conducted by Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, an aviation planning firm. This includes plans to monitor the levels of speech interference and sleep disturbance caused by helicopter activity.

"Why is this monitoring period so short?" demanded Joyce Stickley, a Monroe Place

resident. "It would be easy for helicopter companies to have fewer flights during this testing period, to minimize the extent of the problem."

While residents felt disenfranchised from the scoping process, many speakers, such as Joan Bombura of the Upper West Side, hoped a Master Plan would offer some relief from "the prison I now live in." "In Peru last year, they tortured the prisoners they captured by flying helicopters over their holding cells," Bombura said. "This is what our lives are like now."

## Extinguish Press fire

The Brooklyn Papers

Fire officials doused a small fire in a storage area of the offices of the Brooklyn Heights Press at 125 Montague St. on Monday.

The smoke alarm sounded at about 11:40 am, according to Press reporter Dennis Holt.

"I looked out of my office when the alarm went off and said, 'There's smoke! This is real!'," Holt said.

The two-story building was evacuated.

"There was no damage and no injuries," said 31st Battalion Chief William Conway. The cause of the fire, which began among papers and other debris stored in a rear stairwell on the second story, is under investigation, Conway added.

Fred Halla, a Press editor, seemed unphased by the incident. "That's just part of life," he said, as firefighters finished their work.

HNC p346

# RESIDENT

SERVING THE EAST SIDE VISIT US ON THE WEB: [www.eastsideinfo.com](http://www.eastsideinfo.com)

## news

### Helicopter Meeting Draws Outrage from Residents Who Say They Haven't Been Consulted on Master Plan

The city Economic Development Corp. received an earful from angry residents about its impending helicopter master plan, which will set a comprehensive helicopter policy for the city.

Around 200 people attended a public hearing on the plan at 1 Police Plaza on Sept. 16. The location was changed the day prior to the event to accommodate the crush of anti-helicopter residents.

Joy Held, executive director of Helicopter Noise Coalition, charged the EDC with moving forward with the master plan without the proper public input. EDC officials presented facets of the master plan at last week's hearing prior to listening to comments from the public.

"With no community input into the design of the master plan, no opportunity for individuals to see the workscope before tonight and inadequate notice of this meeting, the city is going through the motions of consulting the community, but we are not fooled," Held said at the meeting.

One participant said helicopter overflights make life in the city like "an urban Vietnam."

Four heliports currently exist in the city. The city has vowed to close the East 60th Street heliport, an action that the EDC now says will happen at the end of the year. The HNC is suing to close the East 34th Street heliport, which is owned by the city.

The Port Authority of NY/NJ owns the Downtown Heliport at Wall Street, and

the State of New York owns the West 30th Street heliport.

Community residents have complained about helicopter noise for years. The HNC, with 15,000 members, was formed to give voice to community concerns.

Held was particularly outraged that the EDC announced last week the days when its representatives would visit neighborhoods and monitor noise levels. The helicopters, she said, will simply avoid the area during those times.

"The master plan is a bad joke at com-

munity expense, conceived behind closed doors and funded by tax dollars," she said. "This is a plan to promote and expand the industry."

A second public hearing will be held in the coming months.

The EDC couldn't be reached for comment on Tuesday, but Shirley Jaffe, an EDC senior vice president, conceded at the meeting: "We have no explanation for why we didn't include the public in the master plan."

— Peter Duffy

HNC P347

# The Villager

West Village, East Village, Soho, Tribeca and Lower East Side

, p. 10

## Copter master plan unveiled amid groans

The outline of a 20-year master plan for the city's heliport operations was unveiled by the Economic Development Corp. last week to an impatient audience that called for an end to helicopter flights over the city.

Joy Held, of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, called the Sept. 16 public information meeting at One Police Plaza a "charade," because her group, which claims 15,000 members, was not invited to help design the proposed plan or the eight-month preparatory study.

An \$343,000 federal grant is funding the study of current operations at the four Manhattan heliports and a projection of future needs, including the impact of noise at various places in the city. Edwards and Kelcey, engineering consultants to the E.D.C., began the study on July 1. Two more public meetings on the helicopter master plan will be held, one in mid-November after the data is collected, and another in late January or early February after completion of a draft of the plan.

Shirley Jaffe, senior vice president for transportation of E.D.C. acknowledged at the opening of the meeting that eliminating helicopter flights from New York City is not an option. She also noted that the Federal Aviation Administration has control over New York City air space, and the city is developing the master plan in conjunction with the F.A.A.

"Even if we closed every heliport, there would still be helicopter flights over Manhattan," she said.

Hugh Fraser, the E.D.C. manager for the helicopter plan, said the plan would seek to "achieve a balance of the needs of the helicopter industry, the city and its residents."

But before Fraser was able to finish his presentation, a member of the audience

declared "You should say 'We're miserable' on every page of that study."

A community participation questionnaire to collect data for the study on the times and places of helicopter noise impact will be a crucial element of the study, an Edwards and Kelcey staff member said. The study will examine the environmental as well as the economic impact of helicopter operations in the city, he promised.

Judy McClain, of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's Helicopter Task Force, noted that the F.A.A. admits it is currently unable to collect all information on helicopter overflights in the city.

After a fatal helicopter accident in the East River earlier this year, the Giuliani administration promised to close the 60th St. heliport. A spokesperson for the E.D.C. said the heliport will close at the beginning of 1998.

The Helicopter Noise Coalition has filed suit against the city to close the heliport at 34th St. on the East River, and Jaffe indicated that the litigation could stop the city from informing the coalition about aspects of the master plan development.

The Downtown Heliport on the East River at Wall St. is owned by the city, but operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Last month, the day after the city evicted National Helicopter Corp. from the 34th St facility with \$700,000 due in back rent, National began flying out of the Downtown facility. But two weeks ago, the Port Authority barred National from Downtown, saying the company had "insurance problems."

Although the 30th St. heliport on the Hudson River is operated under a lease from New York State, it will also be surveyed for the master plan.

# EDC Catches Flack From Choppers

## Angry Helicopter Foes Blast Agency for Excluding Them

BY LIAM P. CUSACK

Outraged residents fired their angry comments at representatives of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) last week.

Their anger spilled over when they discovered that the community had not been involved in the development of the Helicopter and Helicopter System Master Plan.

### Scope of Work

"This meeting is a charade with no community input into the design of the master plan," said

chopper foe Joy Held of the Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC). "The master plan is a bad joke at community expense."

According to Held, members of the HNC — the group that made

See CHOPPER, Page 10.

## CHOPPER

Continued from Page 1

helicopter hazards an issue in the first place — were not invited to the forum and the remainder of the community received little notice of the event.

This heated forum was another battle in the acrimonious war to shut down the city's heliports. The battle lines have been drawn and the participants in this conflict are the EDC and businesses which derive their income from the heliports versus community groups and elected officials who believe that the heliports are destroying the quality of life in their surrounding neighborhoods.

### Long-Term Plan Sought

The EDC is seeking to evaluate the city's current heliport and helicopter operations, as well as to establish a long-term master plan to operate the city's heliports in an efficient, constructive and safe

manner. The master plan's goal is to provide a clear framework for the city to operate and maintain its heliports, so that transportation, commerce and economic development needs are met at the highest standards of safety and efficiency. The master plan will also provide guidelines for heliport development which will satisfy aviation demand in a financially feasible manner while at the same time addressing the aviation, environmental and socioeconomic issues within the community.

With the guidelines set, the master plan will evaluate present and future helicopter flight plans within New York City's airspace and determine whether they are adequate from safety, efficiency and environmental perspectives. The plan will be presented in an written and graphic presentation of heliport development in the city proposing an achievable financial plan and implementation schedule for helicopter development.

The EDC has retained the aviation planning firm of Edwards and Kelcey En-



A community member expressing dissatisfaction with the EDC's handling of the forum.

gineers, Inc. and its associated team of subcontractors to prepare the master plan. According to a spokesman from the firm, the team will build upon the preliminary planning efforts already undertaken by EDC and the Mayor's Office for Economic Development and Planning.

The planning team will manage and coordinate all the activities of all the experts and will provide continuous liaison with the EDC and shall establish and coordinate all contacts with various agencies, community boards and other interested groups, such as the HNC. The final master plan is slated for completion on or before March 1, 1998.

"I am disappointed that concerned members of the public and elected officials were not included in the initial scoping process," said Julie Greenberg, a

spokesperson for state Assemblymember Scott Stringer, at the forum. "There was no public scoping session, which is an important first step in forming a partnership with the concerned community members."

Representatives of the EDC defended their actions by claiming that they were now trying to involve the community in the work toward the completion of the master plan. "We are hosting this forum and distributing a questionnaire in an effort to include the community," said a spokesman for the EDC.

Most citizens who attended felt their criticisms were falling on deaf ears. "They [EDC] meet behind closed doors and are funded by tax dollars," said Held of the HNC. "This is a plan to promote and expand the industry. In fact it is only half a plan, the industry's half." ☐

HNC P-349



HNC p 350

# CITY'S HELICOPTER PLAN MEETS COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

A public meeting intended to raise public awareness about the unveiling of a city plan for heliports and helicopter traffic did little more than ruffle feathers of community leaders last Tuesday.

What was originally supposed to be a public discussion on helicopter traffic turned into a scrap between city officials and community activists.

"This is a charade," said Joy Held of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, a group opposed to all non-emergency helicopter flights over Manhattan.

The coalition, a group of 15,000 residents angered by the environmental and social costs of helicopter traffic, also wants to close all city heliports. The group is currently suing the city to close the East 34th Street heliport.

City officials defended helicopter traffic, saying it provided an economic boost to the city. Some officials also suggested

that closing the heliports would do little to alleviate flight traffic.

"Even if we closed all the heliports, there would still be helicopters over New York City," said Shirley Jaffe, Senior Vice President for the New York City Eco-

nomics Development Corporation (EDC), which designed the helicopter master plan. "We have no control over air space."

Held criticized the city for not including community input in the design of the

plan. "The city is going through the motions of consulting the community, but we are not fooled," Held said.

While the city's "master plan" does include some of the public concerns regarding helicopter noise and traffic, much of its focus seems to be on the growth potential of the tourist-driven he-

licopter industry. The city says a cost-benefit analysis is built into any project of this type. It also cited community input as one of its priorities.

Of the five goals listed in a summary of the master plan, however, only one addresses community concerns.

Local legislators supported Held's call

## HELICOPTER PLAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

for community involvement.

"The need for regulation of this industry to alleviate community concerns regarding noise, traffic, and safety is paramount and should not be ignored," read a statement issued by Assembly member Scott Stringer.

—Joy Shapleton

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



WHITE HOUSE

# The President's Got a New Aid

A life of crowds, music and guns takes a toll on Clinton's hearing



Hearing trouble: Clinton has the most difficulty in crowds

**B**ILL CLINTON, THE FIRST U.S. PRESIDENT ever raised on rock and roll, has earned a related distinction: last week, at the age of 51, he became the youngest commander in chief ever outfitted with dual hearing aids. Clinton's physicians found him in "excellent overall health" during a six-hour physical last Friday. But tests showed a significant loss of high-frequency hearing. Before heading home, the president was fitted for a pair of small, CIC ("completely in canal") devices, which he'll be able to use as needed. His condition is "not anything like profound deafness," according to his audiologist, Dr. James Sun. But it's not a trivial concern. Millions of Americans are at risk of noise-induced hearing loss—and as people of Clinton's generation drift into their 50s,

more and more will feel his pain.

The presidency is a noisy job, what with the helicopters, screaming crowds and military bands. But Clinton's doctors say his problem has developed over several decades. As a teenager, he played sax in a band and hunted ducks with shotguns. Combine those pastimes with a penchant for loud music, and you have a recipe for long-term hearing loss. Any sound louder than 85 decibels can damage the delicate hair cells that line the inner ear. The effects may go unnoticed for long periods, but they accumulate. "Here's a guy with a lot of noise exposure that never bothered him when he was young," says Dr. William Clark, senior scientist at the Central Institute for the Deaf, in St. Louis. "When he got older, it caught him."

Clinton's hearing loss is unusually severe for someone his age—only 10 percent of all 50-year-olds may benefit from hearing aids—but his symptoms are classic. He has no trouble with normal conversation, which occurs at frequencies of 500 to 2,000 herz. But because he falters at frequencies of 3,000 to 8,000 herz, he can't always understand

people in loud rooms or large outdoor spaces. Clinton's internist, U.S. Navy Capt. Connie Mariano, says the hearing aids are not a medical necessity, just a "quality-of-life thing" that will make it easier to enjoy music and navigate crowded receptions.

Hearing aside, the president's physical condition has improved in the past year. He has lost 20 pounds since his last checkup (he's six feet two and now weighs in at 196).

His total blood cholesterol has dropped from 191 to 179. And the knee injury that landed him in a wheelchair last winter has healed. Like many other baby boomers, Clinton seems to grow more health-conscious with age. Unfortunately, healthful living can't fix a damaged ear.

GEOFFREY COWLEY with  
KAREN BRESLAU and  
CLAUDIA KALB

## Overexposed

The president's hearing loss is apparently noise-induced. Some probable culprits:

SOURCE	DECIBEL LEVEL*	SAFE EXPOSURE
Gunshot	140	none
Rock concert	120	7.5 min.
Helicopter	105	1 hr.
Stereo headset	105	1 hr.

\*EACH 10-DECIBEL INCREASE REPRESENTS  
A TENFOLD INCREASE IN SOUND ENERGY

HNC  
P  
352

# The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES **EDITORIALS/LETTERS** SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1997

A 14

## Tourists Can Be a Threat

To the Editor:

I recently returned from a trip to southern Utah, including a visit to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument ("Utah Is Warming Up to Newest Monument," news article, Oct. 13). I was moved to tears by the beauty of the landscape. In contrast, my visit to neighboring Bryce Canyon National Park, which is equally beautiful, was marred by helicopter-tour overflights and tour-bus traffic jams.

The tourism boom in the communities around Grand Staircase-Escalante is a double-edged sword: it provides an economic alternative to environmentally destructive ventures, but it has the potential to become one itself.

MARGARET VERBA

San Francisco, Oct. 15, 1997

HNC p 353



A 26

---

### Hush Those Helicopters

---

To the Editor:

While I applaud the move by the New York City Council to sharply increase fines for excessive noise (news article, Oct. 15), I was disappointed to see no mention of helicopter noise. For me, and the thousands of others who live close to one of the several heliports in the city, this is a major source of numbing noise.

Helicopters sometimes idle their engines for as long as 15 to 45 minutes while refueling or waiting for passengers. Cutting down on the idling will provide some noise relief. I urge the Council to include helicopter idling of more than five minutes to the list of noise violations.

ARUN MALHOTRA  
New York, Oct. 20, 1997

---

HNC p 354

# NY heliport eviction stymies sightseers

by Bill Wagstaff

Barely more than two months after its eviction from the embattled East 34th Street heliport in New York City's Manhattan borough, former heliport operator and chief user National Helicopter Corporation of America is struggling to survive. At one time New York's preeminent rotorcraft operator in both charter and sightseeing ops, National (perhaps better known as Island Helicopters, its parent company) was dealt a serious blow August 13 when New York City evicted it from East 34th St., citing nonpayment of \$700,000 worth of back rent, as well as some environmental complaints concerning pollution from the waterfront heliport.

At the same time, the city announced plans for Johnson Controls, whose airport administration division is now known as American Port Services, to surrender its administration of the East 60th Street heliport in favor of a deal to take over National's slot at East 34th St.—permanently.

The eviction crippled nearly all of National's income sources. The annual transport of some 175,000 sightseers at an average fare of \$80 comprised the lion's share of National's annual revenue, more than 75 percent. National, and corporate predecessor Island, has conducted business in Manhattan's airspace for 27 years. Operation of the 34th St. heliport was a lucrative enterprise, with funds from thousands of landing fees and on-site refueling making up another thick slice of National's revenue pie. Location is key to the success of any business, and East 34th is ideally located for access to fashionable neighborhoods, midtown Manhattan's corporate Mecca, the New York University Medical Center hospitals and the United Nations.

The decision to keep East 34th Street open, albeit under new management, infuriated neighborhood anti-helicopter groups, who claimed the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani reneged on a promise to shut both east side heliports. While publicly announced plans call for imminent closure of the East 60th Street facility for at least a year, the closure is chiefly because of scheduled repair work on an adjacent roadway. Whether or not the facility will be reopened after the construction, who will operate it, what level of operations will be allowed and when have all yet to be decided.

## Is National Mortally Wounded?

Locked out of its 34th Street facility, National's New York home for more than 15 years, the Farmingdale, Long Island-based Part 135 operator is today a shadow of what it was 60 days ago. Just seven pilots are currently employed, down from what had been a total of 22 before the eviction. Mechanics number just five, down from 25. Rotorcraft? Just four, one-third of the 12-ship fleet National operated prior to eviction. Four of the downsized ships were re-

possessed by Bell Helicopter. A trio of Sikorsky S-58Ts lie in pieces around National's hangars at Republic Airport in Farmingdale. The S-58Ts were the cornerstone of what was once Island Helicopter's New York Helicopter airline service, for a time one of the few successful scheduled rotorcraft services in the world. Today that airline is no more, a pricey perk generally included as part of a first-class ticket that fell victim to the airline fare wars. Company managers hope to make the S-

In an attempt to bounce back, National immediately began bussing tourists in from other Manhattan sites to begin sightseeing services at 34th St. The buses served as impromptu waiting rooms, since National no longer has access to its former facilities on the heliport. For the first time in two decades, it was operating on the heliport as a fee-paying user instead of a landlord. It was vital for National to get some of these tourists into the air; many were from overseas, their flights pre-paid as part of pre-arranged package tours.

In late August, city officials got wind of the fact that some National employees were using offices at East 34th St., from which they had recently been evicted. They were

den Airport, a World War II leftover about five miles from burgeoning Newark International. National has begun bussing tourists to Linden for evening sightseeing flights. "Evening flights are by far the most popular with Japanese tourists," Mallen said.

## Anti-Noise Coalition

Aside from the EDC, one of the most powerful opponents New York area commercial helicopter operators are currently dealing with is a middle-aged woman who makes her living as a freelance writer when she's not making life miserable for helo ops. Her name is Joy Held and she hates helicopter noise. Executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, said to number some 15,000 petition-signing members, Held is



Proximity to politically influential high-rise residences, a heavy volume of aerial sightseeing operations and a lack of friends within city government combined to drive National Helicopters from its lucrative base on Manhattan's East River.

S-58Ts airworthy once more, but first a market must be found.

The handful of National employees that were retained have undergone 20-percent pay cuts. Executives suffered 50-percent salary slashes. One high level exec's wife called midway through Aviation International News's recent visit to announce the success of her first day as a local school bus driver, a job she had recently taken in order to help ends meet.

"We have gone from a company that could expect annual gross revenues of some \$14 million to just over \$2 million as things stand today," said National vice-president Pat Mallen. "It's been a tough blow."

## Back Rent Blues

Asked about the various charges leveled at National by New York City's Economic Development Commission (EDC), Mallen blasted the alleged \$700,000 in back rent the EDC claimed National owed on the 34th St. facility. "It's a bogus issue, no matter what the EDC says. We had a Price, Waterhouse audit done that we'll provide to any responsible party. It shows we are not in arrears to the city. There was a time when we were having trouble meeting the rent but that was many years ago," Mallen said. "The audit showed we had no delinquent rent payments, real estate tax payments or security deposits due."

The August 13 eviction could not possibly have happened at a worse time: right in the midst of an especially brisk summer tourist season.

moved off site, but National operations at East 34th St. resumed. While the city could evict Island from offices at a public-use heliport, it couldn't bar National or any other operator from using the facility. "This puts us in the role of the consumer, not provider of the goods and services—as we were before. Paying for what we used to sell really cuts into our profit margin and it means more ferrying of flying equipment to and from Farmingdale, which also runs into money," said Mallen.

Without the on-site offices, waiting rooms and on-site helicopter parking it enjoyed at East 34th St., National is able to accommodate only about 40 percent of its former sightseeing business. (At its pre-eviction peak, it was operating 160 sightseeing flights a day from East 34th.) Allowed just a fraction of its former flight volume at East 34th, National opted to augment its sightseeing capacity with operations from the Wall Street Heliport, a public-use facility located at Manhattan's extreme southern tip. It is administered by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Like East 34th St., Wall Street is available on a first-come, first-served basis, with National paying landing and parking fees just as any other operator.

Operations from Wall Street continued for about a month until red tape issues about National's operating insurance cropped up and the carrier decided to look elsewhere. That "elsewhere" has become Lin-

adamant in her haired of most New York City area helicopter operations. "I have no quarrel with emergency medical services helicopters, or police. If a helicopter can save lives in that situation, so be it. It's the hundreds of thousands of airborne sightseers that are ruining the quality of life in the city that we object to."

"You're not going to lose one tourist to New York if you can't fly them over the city," Held said. "This isn't a theme park, it's a city, where people live and breathe and work and try to get a good night's sleep. There are other ways to look at New York: by foot, by tour bus. There were tourists coming to New York long before there were helicopters. The helicopters simply are not needed."

Held's organization's goals are straightforward. First, permanent closure of the East 34th St. and East 60th St. heliports. Then, suspension of all sightseeing flights over Manhattan. After that, severe cuts in corporate and commercial charter. "What makes more sense? Flying a handful of fat cats around in noisy machines while people on the ground suffer from the noise and pollution. Is that fair?" she demanded.

But what about New York's already chronically immobile surface traffic? "Doesn't it make more sense to work on ways of improving transportation resources available to everyone, rather than those available just to the power elite?" Held replied.

"As far as New York not being a theme park, I think the more candid members of Mayor Giuliani's administration would differ on that," smiled Mallen. "Selling the city's attractions to tourists is one of the mayor's biggest jobs, and over the years several different helicopter sightseers have found that they could sell just about every seat they had available. It's just a very, very popular way to see the city and can be a very good way for an operator to make money."

## As It Stands

"I don't really blame groups like Ms. Held's," said Mallen. "It's EDC that's using the system to put us out of business. What neither understands is that as soon as they do, someone else will come along to take our place. They may fly sightseers in from outlying heliports, maybe even from the airports. Right now we're talking with some interests at La Guardia for space from which to operate sightseers. We'd bus the tourists out from Manhattan and take off and land at La Guardia."

"There's always going to be a way. The only entity that can regulate sightseeing out of New York airspace is FAA and they're not going to do that because of the precedent it would set. New York is just too powerful a tourist attraction to keep people from wanting to see it from the air. You should see the people coming off our copters; they're starry-eyed. They've just seen one of the most amazing sights of their lives. The sheer physical beauty of New York is what we're selling and people are willing to pay to see it."

In the meantime, National is hemorrhaging experienced staffers, personnel it can't afford to lose but doesn't have the cash to keep.

## Selective Hearings

According to the Giuliani administration, work is set to begin on a rotorcraft master plan for the entire city, a sort of grand compromise that would placate anti-helicopter forces while giving rotorcraft operators the access they need. Crown jewel of this plan is a proposed "mega-heliport" to be built atop Pier 76 on Manhattan's west side. "It's a perfect New York public project," commented a helicopter industry onlooker. "It's made everybody angry. The helicopter operators don't think it's near where the passengers want to go. The locals don't like the noise so close. And there's a popular neighborhood park that would be affected."

The Giuliani administration has also managed to alienate both sides of the dispute when it refined its helicopter agenda by not inviting to the meeting Mallen, a long-time veteran of the New York helicopter scene who was originally scheduled to testify before the mayoral master plan group in mid-September. Also uninvited to the meeting was Held and her HNC group. Incensed, Held asked "How can you have a public meeting if you don't invite the public?"

For their part, city officials have denied going back on their word, assuring both sides that the process is in its early stages and that all concerned parties will eventually be allowed to contribute.

HNC P 355

Nov. 4, 1997

# The Missing Leader, And Other Race Gaffes

## The New York Times

In marathon coverage, the only thing worse than missing a runner's dramatic break for the lead late in the race is missing the finish.

For 14 minutes on Sunday, Channel 11 viewers did not know that Franziska Rochat-Moser had overtaken Tegla Loroupe for the women's lead in the New York City Marathon. Loroupe was last seen leading on 138th Street. Then, no word. Elite runners lost in the mists of Manhattan.

During those 14 minutes, the men were winding up; John Kagwe was headed toward a possible course record. So Trans World International, which produced the event for Channel 11, followed Kagwe, then four more runners, to confusion.

Yet no word about the women. No split screens. No picture-in-picture. And nothing verbal from the studio by Al Trautwig or Marty Liquori.

Ordinarily, ignoring a climactic moment would be a sign of incompetence. But T.W.I. was faced with fog-produced technical woes. Telecasting the marathon is complex on dry, sunny days, but fog impairs the capabilities of motorcycle-carried cameras to transmit signals to helicopters hovering above.

"The greatest fear is not wind, snow or rain, but fog," said Paul Bissonette, Channel 11's station manager. With the fog ceiling as low as 200 feet, signals were regularly broken up. Four of the six helicopters eventually made emergency landings. They probably should not have been up at all.

Bissonette believes the 14 minutes of women's coverage were missing because the fog killed them. "There were huge gaps of time when we could not go to a signal to a helicopter because of the cloud cover," he said.

After the 14-minute break, Channel 11 hung with the women for about two minutes, then shifted to an interview with Kagwe, which could have been saved for later, and two minutes of commercials. Hi ho! There's news going on!

Surprisingly, Bissonette said that even if there had been no fog problems, wrapping up the men's race was of greater import than Rochat-Moser's move to the lead. "We probably would have used tape of it," he said.

Bissonette could not say yesterday whether the lack of reporting on Rochat-Moser's taking the lead meant that all means of communicating to Channel 11, such as walkie-talkies that were used by spotters, were also rendered useless by the fog.

But even if the weather had downed all modes of telling us what was occurring on the women's side, tell the viewers. We knew we were missing something.

Still, the fog did not cause all of the production's problems:

¶ In a road race, knowing the time is sort of important. Viewers like to know. But Channel 11's running clock was used far too infrequently.

¶ Despite hearing how moving it is to watch the runners come off the 59th Street Bridge onto First Avenue, there was no shot of the glorious moment.

¶ Kagwe's surge to the lead at about Mile 23 was missed, swallowed by commercials. Breaks came higgledy-piggledy, as if no one paid adequate attention to the race. You can't always guess the right moment for a break, but you can guess better.

¶ Confusion between Liquori and Kathrine Switzer. From 138th Street, Switzer reported that Rochat-Moser was fading to third place. But 14 minutes later, Liquori called Rochat-Moser's lead a "surprise to me, but not to Kathrine, who said she's been running well all year." Switzer soon reinforced her surprise, saying she had no idea "fireworks" would come from Rochat-Moser.

And how much of a lead did Rochat-Moser have? Was it 11 seconds, as Liquori said? Was it 20 seconds, as a graphic said? Or was it a minute, as Liquori would later reckon, when he said Loroupe was trailing Colleen de Reuck by two minutes, "so she's three minutes off the lead." Or not long after, was the lead down to 11 seconds, as Trautwig said? That de Reuck must have some kick.

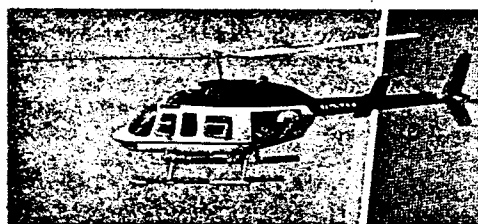
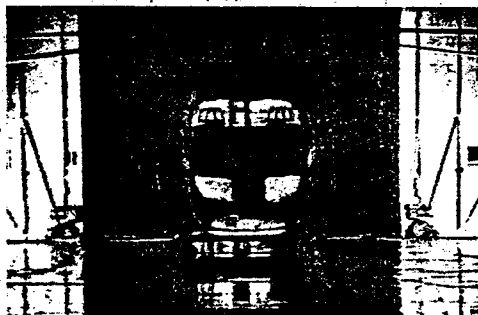
HNC p 356

# The New York Times

# Sunday Styles

Sunday, November 9, 1997

6



Hovering: top, WNBC-TV's vaunted Chopper-4; above, WCBS-TV's news helicopter.

## A Fight For On-Air Supremacy

By JESSE MCKINLEY

**A**NYBODY who has happened on WNBC-TV, Channel 4, lately may have come upon a particularly portentous advertisement. The scene is some sort of a hangar, bathed in rich blue light and filled with a sibilant whirr.

"There's nothing else like it," says the voice-over man, nearly growling. "And no one else has it." Suddenly the camera reveals a striking black silhouette, something like a giant cricket with two big turbines strapped to its sides. "Get ready," con-

cludes the voice. "For the new" — long pause — "Chopper-4."

While the promotion's tone might suggest some sequelized thriller, the ad actually signals the latest escalation in New York's fierce news-helicopter wars, an ongoing battle for control of the city's air and airwaves. Channel 4 is claiming that its new flying machine, due to take flight by year's end, will make the competition seethe with envy.

"It is unlike any other news chopper in the world," said Paula Walker, the new director. "It's so much more superior."

WCBS, Channel 2, begs to differ. The station launched a preemptive attack on Oct. 15, rolling out its latest weapon, a helicopter-mounted infrared camera that the station touts as capable of "unparalleled pictures in no-light and low-light news situations." And WABC, Channel 7, has responded by running promotions pointing out that it has two news helicopters. Meanwhile, Channel 5, WNYW, an official answered a query about air capability with a curt two-sentence statement: "We are happy with our helicopter coverage," said Hilary

Hendler, the general manager. "We think the viewers don't want gimmicks."

Whether or not the choppers are gimmicks, what is certain is that the war they have sparked is an expensive one. Channel 2 spent approximately \$200,000 on its new infrared camera. And while Channel 4 officials won't talk prices, the station's spokeswoman, Terry Doll, said the helicopter cost "at least seven figures."

Much about the new Chopper-4 is shrouded in the kind of secrecy usually reserved for reporters' toupees. Station officials gave vague answers about cost, and would not reveal the new helicopter's size or video capabilities. The timing for the promotions seems clear: this is sweeps month, a 28-day period when stations gauge the size of their audiences — and thus the size of their advertising rates. (The station had hoped to have the chopper flying by now, but Ms. Doll said it still hadn't been delivered.)

"Of course, we don't do it for sweeps," said Bart Feder, the news director of Channel 7, with a tongue-in-cheek defensiveness. "We do it for journalistic pleasure."

Whatever the motive, the increased competition in high-flying coverage is a relatively new phenomenon in New York. While the news helicopter has been a staple in Los Angeles and Houston since the 1970's, New York's aerial fixation didn't begin in earnest until about 1994, when WNBC introduced its first Chopper-4 with a new gyrostabilized camera, permitting steady, focused feeds from overhead. Both WABC and WCBS soon followed.

Some news officials remained skeptical until two events in 1996 showed the choppers' usefulness — the January blizzard and the crash of Flight 800. But those big stories don't come along every day: one of the first uses of Channel 2's infrared camera was a small house fire in the Bronx. "We saw it in a different light," said Mr. Carey.

Regardless of whether helicopters are help or hype, it seems they are here to stay. And the skirmishes are likely to escalate.

"Certain technology has become mandatory," said Mr. Feder of Channel 7. "The truth is, helicopters can be tremendous help in covering the news. Or traffic."

HMC P. 357

## Chopper Issue Still Making Noise

*Legislation introduced to curtail noise pollution, a problem causing West Siders sleepless nights*

BY HERB RUBENSTEIN

Amid whirling charges of environmental neglect and abuse by city residents against three helicopter carriers operating in Manhattan, and their suspect city and state hosts, local Congressional representatives appear to be chopping their way to a noise abatement solution for the helicopter flight paths recently rattling West Side waterfront neighborhoods.

U.S. Reps. Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn B. Maloney and Edolphus Towns have joined to propose legislation this week which would empower the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to issue helicopter traffic and noise restrictions in accordance with the needs of any county or municipality of over 500,000 people. With helicopter takeoffs, landings and intercity overflights totaling 150,000 trips per year (at rates as high as two per minute along the West Side), metropolitan New York is by far the most cluttered whirleybird corridor in the country. Queens, including part of Maloney's district, is famously sandwiched between Kennedy and LaGuardia airports, while the issue has been further com-

plicated by waterfront park development in Nadler's venue.

In the last five years, chopper traffic over New York City has in-

creased by 23 percent, and nearly half of all flights are taken by tourists. Three of the city's four heliports are city-owned, including operations along the East River at 60th and 34th Streets, and near Wall Street. A fourth of New York and New Jersey, which also shares in the operation of the

See CHOPPER ISSUE, Page 6

## CHOPPER ISSUE STILL MAKING NOISE

*Continued from Page 1*

Wall Street facility.

In September, 1996, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger had produced an agreement between the FAA, the Eastern Region Helicopter Council (the industry's principal lobbying agency), and various local politicians to limit Manhattan helicopter flight paths to the East and Hudson Rivers, with one overland flight path north of 86th St. at a minimum altitude of 1,500 feet.

"New York is the city that doesn't sleep," remarked Messinger at the time, "but New Yorkers want to be able to exercise their options about when and where they do." National Helicopters, which was directly affected by Messinger's plan, did not seem to care much about who slept when, or if they slept at all, bringing suit against the plan, which would also have cut the number of flights out of East 34th St. by nearly half.

In January of this year, Federal Judge Sonia Sotomayor threw out most of the restrictions, ruling that local governments could not issue regulations regarding aviation, an area pre-empted by the Federal Government. While the FAA does have power to regulate aviation safety standards, it exercises no provisions to regulate helicopter noise. Indeed the law, in this regard, would appear to date from a time when the roar of engines was thought to be the rhythm and meter of progress itself.

The city did successfully move to evict National Helicopters in April, even as a he-

licopter crashed into the East River off 60th Street, on April 15th. Johnson Controls, a corporate carrier which manages the 60th St. facility, is to take over East 34th Street, pending resolution of National's claim to the sight's underground fuel tanks. The East River accident, which resulted in one death, and the fifth New York City helicopter fatality since 1983, was not held to be the fault of Johnson, in a National Transportation Safety Board finding.

The rejected solution had also bred discontent in Brooklyn, especially around Brooklyn Heights, due to the continued use of the East River Route by the Liberty line, the city's principal tourist carrier, flying out of the Authority's West 30th Street heliport. In October, the deal was recast through the brokerage of Messinger, U.S. Rep. Towns and the Brooklyn Task Force on Helicopter Noise.

"This is a bad joke at community expense, behind closed doors, with our tax dollars," maintains Joy Held, of the New York Helicopter Noise Coalition. The Coalition, with 15,000 members, has vowed nothing less than the complete and permanent shutdown of all commercial helicopter traffic over New York City.

Held insists that the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which oversees heliport policy, and Town's office "have been closed to us. We were not allowed by Towns to send more than one representative to more than one of his meetings. I can't speak for Town's motivations.

HWC  
P  
358

Cont.

It's basically human nature to be selfish." "You can't walk through one riverside park these days without hearing helicopters - it sounds like JFK Airport," says Held. "It's just a divide and conquer strategy."

The Maloney-Nadler-Towns bill would create FAA enforcement provisions for restrictions on the number of helicopter flights per year at heliports, along with permissible days and hours of operation, contingent upon community "health and welfare standards" in regard to noise and atmospheric effects. Any implementation of restrictions would require about seven months of review and public comment.

The City's EDC has pledged to conduct a study, costing at least \$500,000, to determine how best to protect the public from the tremulous sonic incursions. This has not quelled many fears on either side of the East River. The EDC has not held more than one public meeting on helicopter policy in at least six months. The last meeting, in September, was called with less than 48 hours notice provided to anyone, including elected officials.

This did not prevent a number of people from rushing to criticize the proposed study as inadequate in its sampling methods, who reported the distinct absence of helicopter flights on the appointed day of a survey. The nights, according to those who did attend the meeting, remained blotted by a kind of aerial white noise, counteracted only by running a TV 24 hours a day, or an air conditioner through the winter.

Several persons still shuddered at the recollection of the 1978 Pan Am Heliport tragedy, when a helicopter crashed on the landing pad atop the Pan Am (now MetLife) building. One victim was killed by a rotor blade hurled into the street below.

"The EDC can conduct its study," says Nadler, "but we won't be able to wait for it." Meanwhile, the interborough bickering has continued.

"Do you actually think that helicopters can be banned from New York?" asks Karen Johnson, who heads up helicopter policies for U.S. Rep. Towns. "Our office has had no complaints about the new route to date." (Johnson maintains that no West Side residential area is close enough to the latest flight path to be seriously disturbed by related noise).

"There is no way to realistically approach this problem," Johnson states, "except one rung at a time. First of all, we can't close down the heliports in the city because they are public operations, receiving federal funding, and until that funding expires, they must remain open on that basis alone," said Johnson. "Helicopters are a reality of the late 20th century. Over 40 percent of the flights in New York involve tourism - but those flights are not essential to the city's economy - the typical tourist doesn't come here to spend his money on that. That's something we can find a way to end."

"But how would Mrs. Held's group end flights needed for medical emergencies,

law enforcement and fire fighting, or air-sea rescue services?" Johnson believes that the immediate picture is shaped by the need to assess facilities like the Wall Street Heliport (oriented toward business passengers), explaining that it "handles 15,000 flights a year - with a capacity for 60,000 - and it has a 15-year lease. Even if we did ban heliports from the city, the carriers could just move over to New Jersey, and it would be impossible to get the FAA to prevent overflights from other areas."

Sheila Susskind of the Brooklyn Task Force, who worked with U.S. Reps. Towns and Johnson on the route changes, hopes to see all the East River heliports close, but explains that for the present, the route alteration should be feasible because the "Hudson River is broader than the East River, you don't have factors like Roosevelt Island, where people have had a really hard time with this. There are only about 30 helicopters involved."

Susskind feels that the "Helicopter Noise Coalition" people have not connected well with elected officials. They've been too aggressive, where moderation is needed. "I think that since the route changes took effect, many more people up and down the East River, both in Brooklyn and Manhattan are feeling better," said Susskind. "It's not true that we're just trying to ease our pain here in Brooklyn. We think the EDC has been forthcoming, and we'd like to see the East Side, the West Side, Queens, the whole city brought into this on a master plan."

Local helicopter companies were reluctant to comment on record, however an industry spokesperson, Matt Zuccaro, of the Eastern Region Helicopter Council, expressed eagerness to work with any elected officials and community leaders toward an abatement of noise problems. "A lot of pilots," Zuccaro says, "don't fly neighborly because they're new to the area - and some are too complacent. Retraining is sometimes necessary. A lot of this is also caused by conflicting traffic, bad weather, or emergencies." Zuccaro claims that advances in the design and construction of helicopter engines is bound to make them significantly quieter over time, adding that "our goal is 100 percent compliance."

One question still to be answered concerns how the state and city might reconcile a proposed relocation of the West 30th Street heliport to Pier 76 with park development intended for that same site, adjoining the Javits Center. "That doesn't jibe with any plan I know of," said U.S. Rep. Nadler, "they're looking for a new home for that heliport but I'll oppose any plan to put it there."

Maloney reports that several New Jersey and California Representatives are backing the legislation. "It may be fun to ride around in a helicopter," said Minna Elias, who helped Maloney research the issue, "but when helicopter noise ruins your sleep, or maybe your health, it's no fun." Congress isn't expected to have any fun with the bill before January 1998. ■

HWC p359

# OUR TOWN

*East Side Briefs*

## HELICOPTER OVERFLIGHT BATTLE REACHES CONGRESS

In an effort to curb helicopter operations that pose a threat to public safety, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney introduced a bill in Congress last week to empower the Federal Aviation Administration and local governments to regulate flight noise and traffic in large cities.

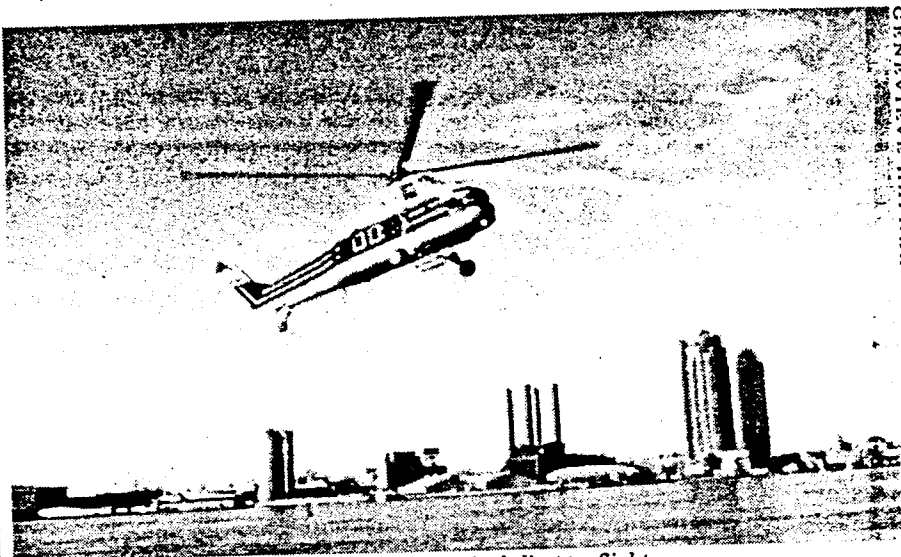
The move follows unsuccessful efforts by the Giuliani administration to exert regulatory power over helicopter overflights. The bill would push the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop a plan to reduce the risks caused by helicopter flights in cities with a population of more than 500,000 people and allow the agency to slash the number of daily flights.

The plan could also limit the type of helicopters used and other restrictions it deemed necessary "to protect public health and welfare."

All emergency, military, administrative, and media helicopter flights would be exempt from the FAA restrictions.

"New York residents report helicopters blasting overhead every two minutes during peak hours and during days and weeks when travel is heavy," said Maloney, Nadler, and Towns in a letter sent to other legislators last Monday night. "There has been a 23% increase in helicopter takeoffs and landings in New York City since 1991."

Should the bill become law, it would have a great impact on the East Side and the rest of the city. Helicopter traffic has long been a point of contention between residents and anti-noise activists and the city, which sees certain economic benefits in permitting greater helicopter



*A new law would restrict helicopter flights.*

activity over the island of Manhattan.

State and local governments currently do not have the power to regulate helicopter operations because aviation is under federal jurisdiction. However, according to the legislators, the "FAA and its experts in aviation also have no power to regulate risks to safety and increased noise associated with a high frequency of helicopter flights."

The planned legislation comes as East Side helicopter traffic has slightly decreased in recent weeks due to a route change. However, the shift has increased activity along the Hudson River, say anti-noise advocates who question the sudden change as an election year gimmick.

The traffic shift, which has been going on for several weeks, occurred when a helicopter company, Liberty, also known

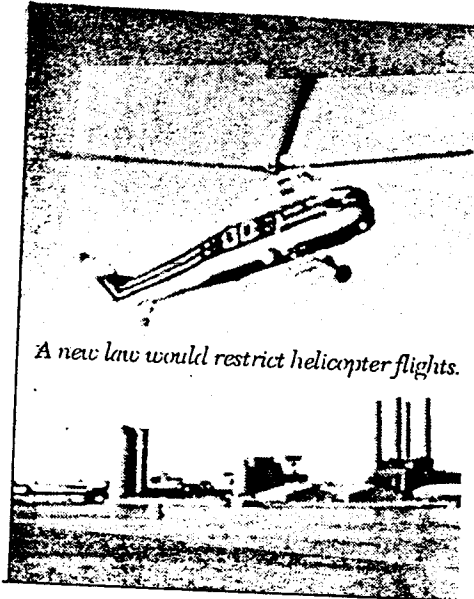
as Air Pegasus, began flying out of a heliport in Brooklyn. Usually, the company flies out of a downtown heliports near Wall Street and West 30th Street.

"This may have decreased traffic on the East Side, but all it's done is basically shift the problem," said Joy Held of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York.

Held said the move may be nothing more than an election year ploy while the real question of helicopter traffic remains answered.

The coalition, a group of 15,000 residents angered by the environmental and safety costs of helicopter traffic, wants to ban all non-emergency helicopter flights over New York City. The group has called the city's helicopter master plan a "charade."

—Jayson Carcione



*A new law would restrict helicopter flights.*

## Chopper Battle Reaches Congress

In an effort to curb helicopter operations that pose a threat to public safety, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney introduced a bill in Congress last week to empower the Federal Aviation Administration and local governments to regulate flight noise and traffic in large cities.

The move follows unsuccessful efforts by the Giuliani administration to exert regulatory power over helicopter overflights. The bill would push the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop a plan to reduce the risks caused by helicopter flights in cities with a population of more than 500,000 people and allow the agency to slash the number of daily flights.

The plan could also limit the type of helicopters used and other restrictions it deemed necessary "to protect public health and welfare."

All emergency, military, administrative, and media helicopter flights would be exempt from the FAA restrictions.

"New York residents report helicopters blasting overhead every two minutes during peak hours and during days and weeks when travel is heavy," said Maloney, Nadler, and Towns in a letter sent to other legislators last Monday night. "There has been a 23% increase in helicopter take-offs and landings in New York City since 1991."

Should the bill become law, it would have a great impact on the East Side and the rest of the city. Helicopter traffic has long been a point of contention between residents and anti-noise activists and the city, which sees certain economic benefits in permitting greater helicopter activity over the island of Manhattan.

—Jayson Carcione



# The Villager

West Village, East Village, Chelsea, Soho, Tribeca, Lower East Side



Villager photo by Al Amateau

Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, left, Edolphus Towns and Carolyn Maloney, and Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, right, at demonstration against helicopter noise.

## New bill seeks to curb noise from helicopters

BY AL AMATEAU

Protesting that helicopters, uncontrolled by federal, state or city rules, are a noisy menace, three Congressmembers met at the 30th St. Heliport on Nov. 17 to announce their bill to regulate chopper operations.

Carolyn Maloney and Jerrold Nadler, whose districts include the East and West Sides of Manhattan, and Edolphus Towns, whose district includes Brooklyn Heights were joined by Helicopter Noise Coalition members as they called for Federal Aviation Administration supervision of helicopter flights in cities with populations over 500,000.

Assemblymember Richard Gottfried and aides to Councilmember Tom Duane and Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger also supported the legislation.

"I was very surprised to learn that the F.A.A., the state and city governments, none of them have jurisdiction over helicopter flights," said Nadler, "this bill would allow city residents to recapture some measure of the peace and tranquility that has been taken away by constant helicopter activity."

Maloney noted that five helicopters have crashed, resulting in five deaths, in New York City since 1983.

The bill, known as the Helicopter Noise Control and Safety Act, would give the F.A.A. authority to determine if helicopters pose a risk to a city's health and welfare. The agency would be empowered to develop a plan to reduce the risk, including limits on the frequency and times of operation.

The bill would also allow local

governments, agencies or heliport owners to submit studies showing that heliport noise is an issue, and then create a plan to address the problem. The F.A.A. would then amend the plan, hold hearings and adopt it.

Towns, whose office was instrumental in negotiating an agreement last month with one helicopter operator to quit sightseeing flights over the East River and confine them to the Hudson River, declared "There are too many helicopters and they fly too often," over the city.

There are 141,000 take-offs and landings per year from the four Manhattan heliports at 60th St., 34th St. and Wall St. on the East River and 30th St. on the Hudson, Towns noted. Of those, 50,000 are sightseeing operations.

Meanwhile, the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, which has a pending lawsuit against the city to close the 34th St. Heliport, has completed a helicopter noise study in the Rivergate residential complex 250 feet from the heliport in support of its suit.

Joy Held, founder of the coalition, said the study, conducted by Cowan Acoustical Associates, documents helicopter noise readings of 94 decibels on apartment terraces and 86 decibels, inside an apartment, a six-fold increase over background noise. The readings, she said, indicate a "significant adverse impact" and "are sufficiently high to interfere with Rivergate residents' sleep, speech and tasks requiring concentration and coordination."

# RESIDENT

## Enemy Territory

Copter Legislation Announced at West 30th Street Heliport; Anti-Helicopter Activists Banned from Warm Waiting Room by Peter Duffy

It was windy and cold at the West 30th Street heliport on Monday when Rep. Carolyn Maloney and Rep. Jerrold Nadler announced legislation to empower the FAA to regulate helicopters:

But stone-faced helicopter officials, who watched the proceed-

other curbs. The FAA currently does little, besides setting altitude and licensing requirements, to restrict flights. Nadler called the lack of FAA oversight "a hole in the regulatory scheme."

Helicopters in the city, said West Side Assemblyman Richard

out of the West 30th Street heliport, had previously flown around the tip of lower Manhattan, up the East River, across northern Manhattan and back down the Hudson.

"They have to re-orient their whole marketing program," Zuccaro said of Liberty.

He said a "limited number of people" in Manhattan object to helicopter overflights. "People have been positive and supportive of what we have done."

Held said her coalition includes 16,000 members and a number of community groups.

Perhaps the most doggedly persistent anti-helicopter activist in the city, Held passed out the results of a noise study conducted by Cowan Acoustical Associates during the press conference.

"It's definitely loud," said company president James Cowan of the area around the East 34th Street heliport where the study was conducted.

At the Rivergate apartment complex, at 401 E. 34th St. (about 250 feet from the heliport), readings of 86 decibels inside of apartments and 94 decibels on terraces were charted by the company.

The New York City Noise Code allows 65 decibels outdoors and 45 decibels indoors.

Ronna Lewis, a tenant of Rivergate, said that noise levels have decreased since National Helicopters, a sightseeing company, was evicted from the heliport. The company is now flying out of Linden, N.J.

"We are very grateful that they are not doing the sightseeing flights, but I shudder to think what will happen if they come back," said Lewis.

Still, every time a copter flies out of the heliport she knows it. And she isn't too happy about it. "It's very loud," she said.

But since Held's group funded the study, aren't the findings

Choppers

Fight to Curb Copter Flights Hits Congress Page 6



Joy Held at the 30th Street Heliport

ings through the heliport's large front windows, weren't letting anyone sit in their warm waiting room.

Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, tried to go in and take a seat — but no luck. She would remain cold along with the others.

As reported in the Nov. 7 *Resident*, the legislation "will grant the FAA [the Federal Aviation Administration] the authority to determine if helicopters pose a risk to the city's health and welfare," said Maloney, "and to develop a plan to reduce that risk."

The plan may include curfews, restrictions on helicopter size and

Gottfried, "benefit a tiny fraction of New Yorkers and out of towners."

The helicopter industry didn't greet the announcement with open arms.

"We are working with the community and the FAA to resolve the issues on our own," said Matt Zuccaro, spokesman for the Eastern Region Helicopter Council, a helicopter advocacy group. "We feel our program of working with the community ... has been successful."

He cited Liberty Helicopters' recent action to limit its sightseeing flights to the Hudson River. The company, which flies

HWC

P 363

Cont.

Cont.

tainted by bias?

"You put a noise meter out and it measures noise," she responded. "How do you doctor that?"

Also busy handing out literature was Arline L. Bronzaft, a retired Lehman College professor and, according to her hand-out, a "well-known authority on the adverse effects of noise on mental and physical health."

She recently completed a study — called "Aircraft Noise: A Potential Health Hazard" — which concluded that "people who are assaulted by aircraft noise do not get used to the noise." The study will be published in something called *Environment and Behavior* later this year.

Nearly 70 percent of city residents who live within the paths of overhead airplanes told the researchers that they were bothered by neighborhood jet noise.

Bronzaft, who lives on East 79th Street, said she had no per-

sonal testimony to offer on helicopters.

"I'm a scholar," she said.

Held, though far from upset about being banned from the heliport waiting room (she expected as much), was stewing over her exclusion from an advisory committee meeting on the city's helicopter master plan, which is being formulated by the Economic Development Corp. The meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 19. (The master plan, when completed, will set the city's helicopter policy.)

What was first described to her as an open meeting was then described as a closed meeting by EDC officials. No matter. Held is going.

"I intend to go there if they bar me ... that is grounds for a lawsuit," she said.

EDC spokesperson Jennifer Wasmer confirmed that the meeting was not open to the public. ■

HNC p 364

# House Bill Would Curb Choppers

Towns, Velazquez,  
Nadler Are Sponsors

By Raanan Geberer

It took almost a year of preparation, but yesterday at the windswept West 30th Street Heliport, Brooklyn Congresspeople Ed Towns, Jerrold Nadler and Nydia Velazquez unveiled a bill to regulate the flight of helicopters.

For more than a year, Downtown Brooklyn and Brooklyn Heights residents have been complaining about an unusually high number of noisy helicopters flying over their neighborhoods. All types of helicopters — TV weather whirlybirds, police copters, corporate choppers, commuter craft from Eastern Long Island — were named as guilty, but tourist helicopters flights offered as part of Manhattan hotel package deals seem to be the major culprits.

Research by community residents and elected officials then revealed that helicopters are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration

within 6 miles of the nearest control tower (in this case, LaGuardia Airport) but otherwise are subject to very few regulations. And Brooklyn Heights and Downtown Brooklyn (as well as Downtown Manhattan, whose residents are also complaining) fall just outside that 6-mile limit.

The bill doesn't propose any concrete remedies. Rather, it gives the administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration power "if a study [says]...that helicopter operations pose a risk to the public health and welfare in a county or municipality with a population of more than 500,000...to develop and implement a plan to reduce that risk."

Measures the administrator can undertake include curfew restrictions on helicopter operations, restrictions on

the daily number of flights, restrictions on the type of helicopter used, rules specifically relating to a particular heliport or heliport, and more.

Some of these restrictions agree with recommendations that Brooklyn activists have been making for months. For example, many want the city to construct a new heliport at Pier 38, West 76th Street, to and shut down the rest. Others want to force flight operators to use a newer, less noisy type of helicopter.

"Our skies," Towns said, talking against a background of nasty noise from the chattering choppers, "have become a giant helicopter flight path with helicopter flights of many kinds...Indeed, as one of my con-

## Curb Choppers

*Continued from page 1*

stituents remarked, "It resembles an air cavalry attack scene out of 'Apocalypse Now.'"

"With this legislation," said Towns, who at one point held up a miniature helicopter, "the FAA could conceivably reduce all helicopter flights to an essential minimum, ban loud and obnoxious sightseeing-helicopter overflights through the NYC metropolitan area."

Later, Karen Johnson, chief of staff for Congressman Towns, said that a bill was drafted earlier this year, but the Congresspeople submitted it for review to the FAA.

While the new Congressional session won't start until January, one New Jersey representative has already expressed interest, she added.

A crowd of about 30 attended the conference. Among them were elected officials, reporters, and several long-time helicopter activists, such as

Irwin and Sheila Susskind of Henry Street Towns' Brooklyn Helicopter Task Force includes local residents, elected officials, community board representatives, and neighborhood groups such as the Brooklyn Heights Association.

HEIGHTS PRESS 11/20/91

HNC p365